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LOCKHEED BACKED IN A BRIBERY CASE

Congressman Reports Its Aid in Vietnam War Spy Drops

No evidence exists that the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation bribed foreign officials with Government money beginning in 1965 to facilitate secret spy missions into North Vietnam, a member of the House intelligence committee, Albert Gore Jr., said yesterday.

The existence of a contract between Lockheed and the Air Force, which provided that the Government would reimburse the company for "bribes to foreign officials" to permit the foreign registration of two American C-130 spy planes, was disclosed on the CBS News program "60 Minutes."

Representative Gore, a Tennessee Democrat, said that the spy operation, supported by a secret \$450,000 fund in Swiss bank accounts, was "designed to infiltrate people into North Vietnam, to assist in our conduct of the Vietnam War." The operation, which apparently included at least one flight over China, was code-named Buttercup.

Mr. Gore, who said he was briefed on the operation by the Air Force, reported that "a number" of "spy drops" into North Vietnam had taken place. But neither he nor any of the former military officers who appeared on the program were asked on the air whether Lockheed had received any of the \$450,000 or paid any bribes with the money. The Air Force and Lockheed officials who wrote the contract refused to be interviewed on the air.

Charges of Embezzlement

The disclosure was made by Representative Gore in a televised interview about charges by the Justice Department that a former Air Force Major General, Richard Collins, had embezzled \$19,000 from the project.

Mr. Gore, in a telephone interview from his Virginia home, said yesterday that, while there was "no evidence" that any bribes had been paid by Lockheed, the records that would cover such matters had been destroyed. He said the Air Force believed General Collins had destroyed the files.

The general's lawyer, Stephen Bronis, said last night that it was a "flat-out lie" that his client had destroyed the records. He said he believed that the records had been destroyed well before General Collins became connected with the Operation Buttercup money.

Mr. Bronis said a Federal Court of Appeals was considering his effort to block a trial of his client on the misappropriation charges. He said the General did not become connected with the money until 1975, three years after the "spy drops" reportedly ended.